

St Leonard's Church, Exeter

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Scope	<p>This policy aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define what should be viewed as a complaint • Provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint • Publicise the existence of our complaints procedure, including via the Church website, so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint • Make sure that office holders know what to do if a complaint is received • Make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way • Make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired and reconciliation explored • Gather information which helps us to improve what we do
Who is responsible for updating the policy?	St Leonard's Church PCC
Original Issue Date	08/11/2021
Last Revision date	04/07/2022 – Update to church wardens
Next Revision Date	30/11/2022

Policy Statement

The St Leonard's Church Parochial Church Council (PCC) is committed to its role which primarily includes *"cooperation with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical."* But there may be a time when you need to complain. This complaints procedure is for those who are unhappy about matters that have affected them for which the PCC is responsible.

This policy does not cover:

- Matters related to safeguarding. All safeguarding concerns should be resolved through the process outlined in our safeguarding policy which is available on the church website (www.stleonards.church/safeguarding).
- Complaints regarding members of clergy, licensed or commissioned ministers (such as Readers), which should be directed to the Archdeacon of Exeter. More information is available on the Diocese of Exeter website (www.exeter.anglican.org/who-we-are/edbf-complaints-policy/)
- Complaints relating your employment by the PCC, which should be resolved through the grievance procedure outlined in the staff handbook.

Confidentiality

Complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following all relevant data protection requirements.

Making a complaint to the PCC

Prior to using this formal complaint procedure the PCC encourages an informal approach to those responsible for the area of ministry you are concerned about to see if the matter can be resolved. If you wish to take the issue further you can then make a written complaint.

Complaints should be made in writing or by email to the Church Wardens whose names and contact details are set out at the bottom of this policy. They will ensure that your complaint is:

- Treated seriously
- Handled fairly without bias or discrimination
- Treated confidentially

In your written complaint you need to set out:

- Your full name and address
- What you think went wrong and how it has affected you, including enough details to demonstrate why you are aggrieved
- What (if anything) you think the PCC should do to put it right

If someone else complains on your behalf the PCC will need written confirmation from you saying that you agree for that person to act for you.

On receipt of the complaint, the Church Warden should immediately record receipt of the complaint in the complaint log.

How your complaint will be dealt with

The Church Warden will write to you or send you an email to confirm receipt of your complaint within 14 calendar days of your complaint being received and will arrange for it to be considered by a complaints committee appointed by the PCC.

The complaints committee are a nominated group of PCC members. If your complaint refers specifically to individuals who are members of the PCC they will not be included on the committee. Members of the PCC will be invited to sit on the committee with the Church Wardens seeking a balanced representation of men and women.

The complaints committee will look fairly into your complaint including seeking the views on the matter from any individuals (whether members of the PCC or otherwise) to which your complaint refers.

The complaints committee may invite you to present your complaint to them. If so, you may attend with a friend / representative if you wish. The meeting should be held as informally as possible. The Chair will explain the purpose of the meeting, introduce the members and emphasise confidentiality. The meeting will be minuted by the Committee.

A Church Warden will write to you with the conclusions from the complaints committee's review and reasons for that outcome. The Church Warden will aim to respond to you in this way as soon as possible, and no longer than 8 weeks after receipt of your complaint.

This will be the PCC's final response to your complaint. A log of the complaint will be kept.

It should be recognised that in some instances people will take positions where the matter cannot be resolved. However, the PCC's aim should be to ensure that the process respects those involved and is just in providing an active concern to those who are vulnerable.

If you remain dissatisfied, you may wish to consider contacting the Charity Commission as while Parochial Church Councils are independent bodies they are charities and as such are regulated by the Charity Commission. The Charity Commission can be contacted either via their website <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity> or by writing to them at Charity Commission First Contact, PO Box 1227, Liverpool L69 3UG.

Church Wardens

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